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TAGS: [OREP](#) [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [IS](#) [GAZA](#) [DISENGAGEMENT](#) [GOI](#) [INTERNAL](#) [GOI](#) [EXTERNAL](#)

SUBJECT: CODEL DREIER'S MEETINGS WITH KNESSET MEMBERS

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel C. Kurtzer for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

1. (C) Summary: In a March 28 meeting immediately following the Knesset vote against a referendum on disengagement, Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin, a disengagement opponent, told Codel Dreier and the Ambassador that a divided Likud is in a state of "crisis." He lamented that disengagement could presage a return to the roadmap, which he also opposes as "very dangerous for the future of Israel." In a separate meeting, MKs Colette Avital (Labor) and Avraham Poraz (Shinui), both disengagement supporters, described the "bizarre" and "paradoxical" nature of the political path Israel is following toward disengagement. Avital, who along with Poraz constitute the Israeli delegation to the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation, called for an enhanced Israeli role in the OSCE. End Summary.

2. (U) The delegation consisted of Representatives David Dreier, Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Alcee Hastings, Doc Hastings, Phil Gingrey, and Ander Crenshaw. MFA North America Division Congressional Affairs Director Eyal Sela and Knesset Diplomatic Advisor to the Speaker Yaakov Levy joined the meetings.

Rivlin: "Roadmap is Dangerous for Israel"

3. (C) Codel Dreier arrived in the Knesset for a meeting with Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin just as the Knesset plenary was about to vote down the controversial disengagement referendum bill. Following the vote, Rivlin led off the meeting by declaring that Likud, "the party of the President, the Prime Minister, and (that represents) one-third of the (Israeli) public, is split." He described the split as "a real crisis for Likud in the near future and a problem for all of Israel." He said that Likud would have to "reassess its position" and declared that "everyone is very confused." Rivlin said that he voted in favor of the referendum bill because he believes that the issue is "a matter of life and death for Israel." He underlined that he split with Sharon over disengagement, which he opposes, and lamented that "...unilateral disengagement is only the beginning."

4. (C) Rivlin noted that he also split with Sharon over the roadmap, which he called "very dangerous for the future of Israel." Rivlin claimed that Israelis are confused because "different roadmaps" are being promoted by the UN, the Europeans, and President Bush. Rivlin stressed his concern for the future security of Israel, touching upon what he characterized as the problems posed by "(Muslim) fundamentalism, nationalism, and the Palestinian refugees." In the final analysis, Rivlin stressed, Israelis and Palestinians will have to live together; "no border will divide us," and for this reason, he concluded, Israel will need to protect itself.

5. (C) Representative Dreier underlined that both parties of Congress are "extraordinarily supportive" of Israel, which he termed the "lone democracy" in the region. He also acknowledged Likud's internal struggle over disengagement, but, while recognizing Israel's security needs, he underlined that the disengagement plan also enjoys bipartisan Congressional support.

6. (C) In a separate meeting with Codel Dreier, Labor MK Colette Avital noted the historic nature of the day in the Knesset, characterizing it as "the stormiest day of the year." She noted the "paradox" that Sharon's government was being supported by opposition parties, while part of Sharon's party "does not support its own government." Poraz characterized the political dynamics leading up to the Knesset's vote on the referendum bill as "bizarre." He complained about his party's treatment by Sharon, charging that Sharon "kicked out" Shinui from the government in order to bring in Labor and a religious party.

Avital: Israel Wants Stronger Role IN OSCE

7. (C) Avital, along with Poraz, represents Israel in the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation, an observer

delegation in the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE). She underlined that she sees Israel's participation in the OSCE observer group as an important opportunity for Knesset members to meet with Arab parliamentarians. After the death of Yasir Arafat, Avital said, a greater opportunity exists to normalize relations with Arab countries, with positive signals already coming from Egypt and Jordan. Noting that he and Rivlin had just returned from the Europe-Mediterranean Parliamentary Conference in Cairo, Knesset Diplomatic Advisor Levy stressed the importance of Israel continuing to make contact with Arab parliamentarians. In Cairo, Rivlin met with Egyptian opposition party representatives, the first time, Levy said, that an Israeli official has met with representatives from this group.

18. (C) Avital said that Israel wants to upgrade its observer status in the OSCE. While the GOI does not have "too much of a problem" with greater OSCE involvement in the Middle East, it does want a new status that enables it to participate in dialogue on issues that concern Israel. As an example, Avital noted Israel's surprise some two years ago when the Italian delegation proposed, without Israeli input, a resolution calling for Jerusalem to be designated as an international city. Avital also proposed that Israel host an OSCE forum to which Arab parliamentarians could be invited.

19. (C) Rep. Diaz-Balart underlined that the U.S. wants to be helpful in facilitating contacts between Israeli and Arab parliamentarians. Rep. Dreier offered U.S. assistance to create a "nexus between Israel and Arab countries." He noted that Congress is in the process of establishing a new commission that will examine how to assist new and emerging parliaments. He noted Congressional interest in facilitating technical and other assistance to emerging parliaments, including that of the Palestinian Authority.

110. (U) Codel Dreier cleared this message.

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KURTZER